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Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 090149

61
ORIGIN NODS-00

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66011
DRAFTED BY: NEA:EGABINGTON
APPROVED BY: NEA:EGABINGTON
S/S:MR ORTIZ
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O 142159Z APR 76 ZFF4
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 090149

NODIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT BEIRUT 3297 ACTION SECSTATE DTD 14 APR

QTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3297

NODIS

FOR SECRETARY FROM BROWN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE
SUBJECT: APRIL 13 VISIT TO JOUNIEH - GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

1. I HAVE A FEW GENERAL IMPRESSIONS FROM MY VISIT TO JOUNIEH APRIL 13. THE FIRST IS THE OVERWHELMING CONCERN ABOUT SECURITY AND THE CONVICTION THAT SYRIA ALONE CAN PROVIDE IT, WITH SOME REALIZING THAT INTERNATIONAL COVER FOR THE SYRIANS WOULD BE PRUDENT. MOST ARE CONVINCED THAT ASAD HAS "CLEAN HANDS" (AS GEMAYEL PUT IT) BUT AFTER SO MANY YEARS OF TRADITIONAL MARONITE-SYRIAN ENMITY THEY REMAIN SOMEWHAT PUZZLED BY THIS DEVELOPMENT.

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WM THE SECOND IMPRESSION IS THAT THERE WAS AN IMPROVEMENT TO

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SOME EXTENT IN CONFIDENCE AS COMPARED WITH THE SITUATION EXISTING AT THE TIME OF MY PREVIOUS VISIT. MONASTIC ORDER CHIEF KASSIS SAID HE FOUND MORE SUPPORT IN EUROPE WHENCE HE HAD JUST RETURNED. THE ASAD SPEECH OF COURSE CONTRIBUTED, AS DID THE MERE FACT THAT I WAS AGAIN THERE, IF I AM TO BELIEVE WHAT I WAS REPEATEDLY TOLD.

3. THE THIRD GENERAL IMPRESSION IS THAT THERE IS NO GENUINE DESIRE TO DIALOGUE WITH THE OTHER SIDE, THE CHASM OF DISTRUST STILL BEING TOO BROAD TO BRIDGE.

4. INCIDENTALLY, I FOUND GEMAYEL TO BE PROBABLY THE MOST FLEXIBLE. HE STATED THAT, WHILE AT ONE TIME HE WAS NOT PPEPARED EVEN TO DISCUSS A CHANGE IN THE CONSTITUTION, HE WAS NOW PREPARED TO LISTEN TO ALMOST ANY PROPOSAL. IF EVER A CHANCE FOR DIALOGUE DEVELOPS, GEMAYEL WOULD PROBABLY BE THE LEADING CANDIDATE TO REPRESENT THE CHRISTIAN SIDE. BROWN UNQTE KISSINGER

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